

MENDIP GLIDING CLUB

NOTES FOR DUTY PILOTS

1. Overview

The Duty Pilot's function is to facilitate and co-ordinate activities on the airfield. An efficient Duty Pilot keeps things moving, which maximises flying and minimises waiting, and hence frustration.

The Duty Pilot is a co-ordinator. His/her function is to allocate duties to appropriate members, so that the various tasks necessary to allow flying to take place are carried out in an appropriate order. The Duty Pilot should do very little other than delegate. It follows that the Duty Pilot needs to be located at the centre of action, the hangar during set-up, and the launch-point thereafter. If insufficient members are on site for all the tasks, he/she must stay at the "business-end", wait for members to arrive and then delegate. If the Duty Pilot leaves his/her post, co-ordination is lost and chaos is always waiting to take over!

The Duty Pilot is the main link between the Duty Instructor and the other members and is responsible for carrying out the latter's wishes. His/her role can also be regarded as similar to the chairman of a meeting. All instructions on the organisation of the day should be "through the chair" or via the Duty Pilot.

2. General Responsibilities

The Duty Pilot's first responsibility is to turn up! All solo pilots are liable to be on the roster, so everyone needs to watch notice-boards and note their duty dates. If you are listed for an inconvenient date, it is your responsibility to organise a deputy or a swap, preferably making a written note of the change on the duty roster.

If the duty Winch Driver has not turned up, appoint one. Make an assessment of how many Winch Drivers are available, and make it known what the expected duration of winching sessions should be. Winching is much more pleasant when the driver has some idea of when he is due to be relieved.

Once flying commences, the Duty Pilot's job is to ensure a smooth flow of launches and a smooth flow of pupils to the instructor(s). Keep an eye on the flying list and ensure that when a member is due to fly, he is aware of the fact and is at the launch-point, not out on a glider or cable retrieve.

If a spare two-seater and instructor are available, trial lesson and voucher flights can be slotted in. Make sure that the candidates are ready, introduce them to the instructor and make sure that they are briefed. If the Duty Instructor is the only instructor available, trial lessons should not jump the queue over club members waiting for instructional or check-flights.

The situation which the Duty Pilot is aiming for is that, whenever the cables are returned to the launch-point, two gliders are on line, complete with pilots strapped in, checks done and ready to go - the only exception being when everything is airborne! A similar situation should apply for gliders awaiting aerotow at the end of the strip. Glider and cable retrieve vehicles should be in position to ensure a speedy and efficient turn round.

The launch point should only have gliders on line if they are about to be launched. A glider on line should be complete with pilot. Any gliders not ready for immediate launch should be in a “ parking slot” where they will not interfere with launching. Pilotless gliders left on line should be removed. As gliders are brought back from the landing strip to the launch point, the Duty Pilot’s task is to instruct the retrieve drivers where they are to be parked.

Because the Duty Pilot spends most of his time at the launch-point, he often takes on the duty of Launch Point Marshal. However, there is no reason why this job cannot be delegated like any other.

The Duty Pilot’s eyes need to be everywhere, trying to anticipate and prevent any problems, making sure that jobs are rotated before the member gets too bored. If problems do occur they obviously need the Duty Pilot’s attention. Information on reasons for the problem and progress on solving it should be fed back to members and visitors.

The Duty Pilot should normally complete his/her half day session without relief but should brief and hand over duties (and the yellow jacket) temporarily to someone else if leaving the launch point

Help and advice from senior members, if addressed to or through the Duty Pilot should always be welcomed. If a senior member issues orders other than through the Duty Pilot, or countermands an instruction that he has given, then discuss this with them and ask that they work through you. If in doubt, refer the matter to the Duty Instructor.

If you are a recent solo pilot and inexperienced Duty Pilot, do not be afraid to ask for advice. Most senior members will be only too pleased to help. However, do not expect them always to be right! Do what seems sensible and trust your own judgement. Most of the job has no “right” or “wrong” way to do it; it requires co-ordination according to one person’s system, and when you are on duty, you are that person!

3. Morning Duty Pilot

Morning Duty Pilots should arrive at the airfield by the designated start up time to open up, then to allocate duties to members as they arrive. You should know the codes for the clubhouse door, the intruder alarm and the kitchen safe (where the keys for the gate, hangar and MT shed are kept).

The yellow jacket should be donned as soon as possible after arrival; this helps to indicate a clear chain of command and is particularly useful for visitors.

The specific morning tasks to oversee are:

- 1) Opening gates and car park.
- 2) Unlocking the hangar, MT shed and clubhouse. Switch off alarm and electric fence.
- 3) Starting a flying list. When complete make copies for Duty Instructor and Duty Pilot.
- 4) Check for any advisory notices in the clubhouse about the state of equipment or tasks which need attention.
- 5) DI and, if necessary, start generator. Light clubhouse fire if necessary.
- 6) Getting out the vehicles, making sure that they have all been DI’ed and have sufficient fuel for the day. (Re-fuelling should have been carried out at the end of the previous day’s flying.)
- 7) Clearing livestock off the airfield and setting up the windsock.

- 8) Start to arrange the set up of the airfield. (The final decision about the layout rests with the Duty Instructor who is also responsible for obtaining a detailed weather forecast.)
- 9) Setting up the winch, pulling out and checking the cables. Remember that the winch should be DI'ed and the engine started before leaving the hangar area. The far end of the airfield is no place to discover a problem. When required, activation and resetting of guillotines to check correct function.
- 10) Getting out aircraft and arranging DI by suitably qualified members. Make a judgement based on number of members present and weather conditions as to how many and which gliders to get out. The final decision lies with the Duty Instructor.
- 11) Cleaning gliders if necessary.
- 12) Checking communications between winch and launch-point. Checking availability of strops.
- 13) Checking with the Duty Instructor how many (if any) trial lessons can be accepted.
- 14) Welcoming any visitors and allocating members to look after them. Where necessary get visitors to complete temporary membership forms. Ensure that any having trial lessons have voucher details completed or pay for their flights before departure.

If a briefing is to be held, make sure that everybody attends. If the launch-point is to be at the western end of the airfield, this is a good time to appoint drivers, etc, and make sure that everything proceeds to the launch-point in a co-ordinated manner. Check that members have been trained in the duties that they are allocated.

4. Afternoon Duty Pilot

The afternoon Duty Pilot continues with the normal responsibilities until flying finishes and is then responsible for co-ordinating closing down activities. He/she should be particularly aware of “fly/drive” members who regularly try to disappear soon after they have had their flight(s); occasional early departures are understandable but the norm should be for members to remain to the end to help pack up.

The specific afternoon tasks to oversee are:

- 1) All aircraft accounted for; check for cross country flights including any land outs or retrieves in progress.
- 2) Gliders cleaned and dried. Hanger stacked according to stacking plan.
- 3) Batteries removed and put on charge.
- 4) Parachutes replaced in clubhouse locker and checked that all are present.
- 5) Gliders covered as required.
- 6) Log sheet complete and legible. White copy in Airfield Treasurer's safe in the bus, yellow copy in clubhouse file.
- 7) Windsock taken down.
- 8) Winch and vehicles refuelled and parked in the MT shed.
- 9) Electric fencing erected and switched on.
- 10) Livestock released.
- 11) Any necessary debriefing carried out.
- 12) Any faults with equipment written up on clubhouse notice board and/or relevant member informed.
- 13) Generator switched off, alarm set, buildings secured and gate locked.